



The Planning Inspectorate

Room 406 / Kite Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Temple Quay
Bristol BS1 6PN

Direct Line 0117-372 8902
Switchboard 0117-372 8000
Fax No 0117-372 6241
GTN 1371-8902
e-mail:
chris.pritchard@pins.gsi.gov.uk
<http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk>

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DP 506

Date: 10th NOVEMBER 2005

Dear Sir

1. I was appointed by the Office of the First Secretary of State to hold a public inquiry into objections to the Deposit Draft of the Babergh Local Plan 2nd Alteration. The Inquiry was held between the 28 September 2004 and the 25 April 2005. A pre-Inquiry meeting was held on the 17 June 2004. Before, during and after the Inquiry I made a number of accompanied or unaccompanied site visits on matters that were subject to objection.
2. There were some 9661 duly made representations, consisting of 8472 objections and 1189 in support, received to the first deposit plan, revised deposit plan and Pre-Inquiry Changes. During the consultation process and the Inquiry 1021 objections were withdrawn, 221 conditionally.
3. In my consideration of all objections I have had regard to the submissions at the Inquiry and in writing and to all other material considerations, including national guidance and government circulars. I have not had regard to changes in local planning circumstances subsequent to my closing the Inquiry as I have not received representations thereon. The Council will need to take these changes into account in considering my recommendations. The Council will also need to take into account any further government advice published subsequent to the completion of the report.
4. There were a number of late changes requiring modification to the Plan but with the length of the Inquiry I was able to deal with such changes and incorporate them fully into my report.



5. The main policy issues raised concerned the amount and location of land allocated for housing and for employment during the Plan period, the extent and description of villages and settlement boundaries, and thresholds for the provision of affordable housing.
6. The two main issues at Inquiry were the expansion of Sudbury in the form of the Chiltern Mixed Use Development to the north of the town, and the food store in Hadleigh on the Brett Works and the adjoining meadows. The former had caused more recent concern because the western by pass has been rejected by Ministers. The Tesco supermarket had already been the subject of a Section 78 Inquiry and was dealt with in detail by a previous Inspector and the First Secretary of State. However, the revised proposals involve a different access and other material changes.
7. Objections were raised to a number of allocated sites and I have recommended that some be deleted mainly because they are not sustainable, or are less suitable than alternative omission sites. There was also concern by Objectors that the Structure Plan requirements for housing supply would not be met. However, the estimates of capacity on a number of sites were on the conservative side and if my recommendations are adopted by the Council I consider there would be adequate provision for housing during the Plan period.
8. I have recommended that the definition of * and ** villages be clarified and simplified
9. I have recommended that the thresholds on affordable housing be revised and made more flexible to better reflect national guidance. I am mindful that strict adherence to these thresholds will make it even less likely that the Council will secure the estimated requisite amount of affordable housing during the Plan period, but this has to be balanced against the reasonableness of the policies adopted.
10. Much of the Inquiry was taken up with informal hearings with a few round table sessions and formal sessions. This informal approach produced a more relaxed atmosphere and helped considerably to reduce the number of sitting days.
11. I wish to express my thanks for the help and co-operation I received throughout the Inquiry from officers and staff of the Council. Members and officers gave up their limited space to accommodate my Programme Officers and me during the Plan period. The Council also produced skeleton disks, which included details of the objections received, to help me in the preparation of my report. The objections could have been shorter, by grouping similar objections together, but with the tight deadline imposed by legislation, apart from some minor changes I was not able to précis down the objections much to produce a shorter report. I have, therefore, inserted the bulk of the objections as appendices at the

end of each chapter. The titling, and the format of chapters and paragraphs is that of the skeleton produced by the Council.

12. Because of the tight deadline imposed on the Council, and particularly on its Officers by new legislation, together with the shock and sadness at the loss of Neil Greig, who took such an active part in the Inquiry, parts of my report were submitted early. Groups of chapters, in no particular order, were forwarded as they were substantially completed.
13. Before and throughout the Inquiry I was ably assisted by both Simon Osborn and Annette Williams, my Programme Officer and Assistant Programme Officer to whom I wish to express my sincere thanks for their good humoured support and hard work.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric T Searle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Eric T Searle

The Chief Executive
Babergh District Council
Corks Lane
Hadleigh
Ipswich
Suffolk IP7 6SJ